



# Doing What Works

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FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

## Using Evaluation Data to Improve Teaching

Waynesboro, Tennessee • June 2007

**Topic:** Preschool Language and Literacy

**Practice:** Teach Phonological Awareness

### Highlights

- Description of how one program used evaluation data to identify instructional needs and develop improvement plans
- Defining the role of evaluators
- Using evaluation data to shape a professional development plan for improving instructional practice
- Helping staff understand and use data to support children's learning
- Value of using classroom observation and videotaping as part of a professional development program

### About the Site

Wayne County Literacy Acceleration Project

Waynesboro, Tennessee

### Demographics:

- High unemployment rate
- 60% ECS

- Less than 1% ELL
- 8% Disabilities

**Site Highlights:**

- Teacher training in interactive and dialogic reading focused on increasing vocabulary and comprehension using multiple readings, implementing interactive techniques, and helping children reconstruct the story
- External evaluators work with teachers (including videotaping of instruction), help staff understand how to use evaluation data to identify where programmatic changes are needed, and follow up by recommending professional development training and assisting with the development of action plans
- Extensive, daily on-site mentoring and a classroom visitation program

**Full Transcript**

I am Shirley Curry with the Wayne County Early Reading First preschool program here in Waynesboro, Tennessee. In 2004, we got an Early Reading First grant. Our relationship with Vanderbilt then expanded exponentially and they then began to not only take a look at the student outcome, but they began to take a look at the classroom itself, the environment of the classroom, the workshops which provided professional development for the teachers, as well as the student activity in the classroom and the students' results.

We had a very defined role for our evaluator. They were to assess, in a timely manner, the students' outcome. They were to take the analysis and summarize the data. They were to provide the feedback to the administrators and they were to communicate information to the teachers in an understandable format. And then they were to assist the administration in our professional development.

We would meet with our assessors at least three or four times a year, or as often as we needed. And they would meet with the teachers, and they would come at least twice a year to meet with the teachers and explain to the teachers what the data said and what it meant, as well as giving some ideas about what do you do with it.

They used various assessments. Our main assessment was the Woodcock-Johnson. There was someone from Vanderbilt in those classrooms nearly every day and they had special instruments in

which they coded what was going on in the classroom. What was the teacher doing? What were the children doing? What about the conversations? What about the arrangement of the classroom? Then we also videotaped each of our teachers and provided them a videotape so that they might look at themselves in action, make whatever corrections they felt they needed to make, and then at the end of the grant we videotaped them again.

So I looked over all of our information and I found six areas which had just been particularly profitable to us—as information was given us from our evaluator. First of all is our outliers. They showed us the kids that were really, really low so that we could take those and begin to follow them through, because those are the ones who would really fall out had they not had the pre-K experience. Secondly, they showed us the gender differences—that all of our boys, nearly every one of them, scored less than the girls. Then the conversations between the teachers and the students, they did a recording of did the teachers talk to the children—if they do, do they ask them questions? Is it one-way questions? Is it five-way questions? So we had to see that we were a little weak on that and we had to have some training on the teachers' interchange between the teachers and the students.

Then our PALS scores were not what we wanted them to be. So we brought in professional development experts to help us with that. Then our spelling and our writing, which was always our lowest score—they gave us some suggestion about what to do with that. And then our classroom management—we looked to see that we were spending a good bit more time—exactly, we were spending four times more time in transition than our curriculum had suggested. So we had to have some special help. Their information was so very helpful to us, that they could give us an instrument that measured it. They could tell us what the outcome was. Then they suggested to us where we might get professional help to strengthen that weak area. Then they came back, addressed the weak area and showed us our results.

Let them do their job, don't be defensive of everything that might come up, be cooperative and trust each other because you're on a team and the whole idea is to improve the learning of the child.